DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 376 237 UD 030 088

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TITLE Expanding Paraprofessional Staff To Help Children Succeed in School. Neighborhood Employment Initiative.
INSTITUTION Institute for Responsive Education, Boston, Mass.
SPONS AGENCY Leon Lowenstein Foundation, New York, NY.
PUB DATE Sep 93
NOTE 45p.
AVAILABLE FROM Institute for Responsive Education, 605 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215 ($8).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Involvement; Educational Needs; Elementary Secondary Education; Employment Opportunities; *Employment Practices; Financial Support; *Neighborhoods; *Outreach Programs; *Paraprofessional School Personnel; Parent Education; Parent Participation; Personnel Selection; Program Development; *Training
IDENTIFIERS *New York (New York); New York City Board of Education

ABSTRACT

A preliminary study reports on the possibilities for increasing the employment of people from New York City's poor neighborhoods to help children succeed in school through such nonclassroom activities as home visitation, parent education, facilitation, and coordination of parent-involvement activities, and assistance in the provision of health, counseling, and family services. It is based on a review of present paraprofessional staffing in New York City and discussions with people inside and outside the school system. Preliminary results indicate that hiring neighborhood people to help schools is a sound concept. At present, there are many paraprofessionals in New York, but only a small number of paraprofessionals are employed in reaching out to families. There is a pressing need for the kinds of services such a staff could provide. Some existing funds could be reprogrammed for these purposes, and some new sources are possible. The selection and training of paraprofessionals is extremely important, as are leadership and administration, career ladders, and continuing evaluation and research of their use. Appendix A provides background information, and Appendix B is a suggested funding proposal. (SLD)

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NEIGHBORHOOD EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

# Expanding Paraprofessional Staff to Help Children Succeed in School

By David S. Seeley

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**Report of the Schools Reaching Out Project**

**Institute for Responsive Education**

**September, 1993**

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## Summary of Findings

The following preliminary study, initiated and funded by the Leon Lowenstein Foundation, reports on the possibilities for increasing the employment of people from New York City's poor neighborhoods to help inner-city children succeed in school through such non-classroom activities as home visiting, parent education, facilitating and coordinating parent involvement activities, and assisting in the provision of health, counseling, and family services. It is based on a review of present paraprofessional staffing in New York City and discussions with a wide range of people in and outside the school system as to the feasibility of "Neighborhood Employment Initiatives" (NEI) as part of current education-and welfare-reform efforts.

The primary findings of the study are:

1. The neighborhood employment concept. Hiring neighborhood people to help schools successfully educate inner-city children is a sound concept deserving of more attention and support from school systems and educational reformers.

2. Paraprofessionals currently helping parent partnerships. Although there has been a significant increase in paraprofessional staff in public schools in the last thirty years, only a small percentage of this staff is employed in reaching out to families to help them provide more support for their children's education or in helping teachers and schools relate more successfully to students and their families.

3. The need for paraprofessional services. There is a pressing need for the kinds of services such paraprofessional staff could provide: home visits, parent education, field trips, coordination of parent activities, outreach to community resources, facilitating use of support services, helping teachers deal with difficult home situations, etc.

4. The present status of paraprofessional staffing in NYC. Paraprofessional staffing in New York City public schools is already extensive: almost 40,000 paraprofessionals are employed in the system, including classroom aides, school-lunch helpers, and a variety of other kinds of aides. Indeed, the "system," if it is one, is bewilderingly complex. There are many different job titles,

with different salary levels, varied career-ladder arrangements, different job descriptions and limitations, a number of different union locals, and a variety of local, state, and federal funding sources. In addition to the official and legal arrangements, there are various informal arrangements regarding the hiring and placement of paraprofessionals. In order to mount a successful program that will not become entangled in procedural and political problems, it is important to have the help of an institution with considerable expertise in this area.

5. Educational funding. Some education funding can be reprogrammed to hire more paraprofessional staff. Both local tax funds and Chapter 1 funds are already used for paraprofessionals in New York City, but because of the ineffectiveness of some of the programs and the reputation of "paras" as patronage employees, increased employment of paraprofessionals is not always seen as a progressive move. If such hiring were part of a serious new initiative by school systems to increase partnership with families and communities for the sake of significant improvements in student success, there might be more chance of increasing the funds available, either through reprogramming existing funds or increased appropriations.

6. New non-educational funding possibilities. Increased non-education funding may become available for such paraprofessional staff as states and the federal government seek viable employment opportunities to reduce welfare dependency. Lack of available jobs within the qualifications and logistical circumstances of many unemployed inner-city people is a serious stumbling block to current welfare-reform efforts. Paraprofessional employment in schools could help solve this critical problem.

7. Selection and training. The selection and training of paraprofessionals is extremely important. Although neighborhood people are an underutilized and unappreciated resource for successful education because of their local knowledge and relationships, merely living in an inner-city neighborhood is not sufficient qualification. Careful screening and training is necessary to ensure the qualities, skills, and knowledge necessary for success. Training of the regular staff to work with paraprofessionals in forging a new relationship with families and communities is also very important.

8. Leadership and administration. Paraprofessional hiring, assignment, and supervision is often relegated to lower levels of administration. A "neighborhood employment initiative" of the type discussed in this report requires leadership from the superintendent and school board and administrative implementation and oversight that will make sure that the new paraprofessional staff is not just an employment program for neighborhood people, but part of a very important shift of school policy and practice to a collaborative institution with new roles and relationships designed to produce much higher levels of student achievement and socialization.

9. Career ladders. Effective ways for paraprofessionals to increase their education, skills, formal credentials, and job status ("career ladders") are important both for the maximum utilization of talented neighborhood people and for effective alternatives to welfare. Although there are effective career ladders currently functioning in New York City, many paraprofessionals are not effectively served by them. The administration of the neighborhood employment initiative should take special care to make sure that the necessary institutional relationships, orientation, and training opportunities are in place.

10. Evaluation and research. Very little evaluation and research has been done on paraprofessional employment in school systems. In New York City, paraprofessional employment has grown through a variety of new programs, needs, and funding opportunities, without much planning or assessment of alternative options. A strong evaluation and research component would be an important part of a neighborhood employment initiative that will have prospects of replication and of helping school systems become more effective in reaching inner-city children and their families.

# The Neighborhood Employment Concept

## Introduction

Paraprofessional staffs are by now widely accepted in public school systems, but the potential for employing people from poor neighborhoods to help poor and minority children become successful learners and responsible citizens has only begun to be tapped. The current need for helping far more of these children succeed in school, and the concurrent need for increasing employment opportunities as part of welfare reform, create a compelling case for school systems to develop "neighborhood employment initiatives."

The term "paraprofessional" is used throughout this report to refer to regularly paid employees who require less than professional qualifications and who usually assist professional staff—teachers, counselors, social workers, doctors, nurses, or administrators. Paraprofessionals can also assist with school functions not directly under the control of a professional staff member, including helping a school secretary or a parent organization. Schools use a wide variety of job titles, such as "classroom aide," "school aide," "neighborhood worker," "family assistant," and "substance abuse specialist," for these positions, and sometimes there are "in-house" titles used in the school that are different from the official job titles on the school system payroll or union roster. No one term is entirely satisfactory for all these positions.

The concept of a "neighborhood employment initiative" as discussed in this report focuses primarily on non-classroom paraprofessionals. This is partly because this is the area where we see the greatest opportunity for increased employment for helping schools relate better to inner-city children and families, but it is also because the area of classroom aides has been dealt with in other reports.* Classroom aides therefore are touched on only briefly in this report because some of the important thinking in that area is relevant to the subject of this report.

The emphasis in this report on paraprofessionals employed from the neighborhood of the school is not intended to diminish the importance of other kinds of helpers that schools should draw upon in their increased efforts to help children succeed in school—traditional unpaid school

volunteers, parents who offer to help with various school efforts, business and professional people, alumni, or high school and college students who might come in to help with mentoring or vocational counseling, etc. All such resources should be looked to and, in most inner-city schools, greatly expanded, in order to help children reach the new higher expectations called for in current school-reform programs. A healthy mix and collaboration of many diverse kinds of people who can make different kinds of contributions to children's successful development, both in and outside of school, is probably what will work best. In fact, some of the paraprofessionals discussed in this report will be needed to help organize, train, and coordinate some of these other non-staff helpers.

The actual technical details of hiring, training, and supervising paraprofessionals is highly complex and still not fully institutionalized, and any implementation effort in this area will require more detailed and current information than this report can provide.

**Current Employment of Paraprofessionals in New York City Schools**

Currently, the New York City public schools employ almost 40,000 paraprofessionals, including about 16,500 classroom aides (of whom about 6,000 are assigned to special education and 2,500 are substitute special ed paras) working under the direction of teachers, and almost 23,000 non-classroom aides of various types working in jobs such as school lunch helpers (9,000), school aides (8,000), school guards and safety officers (3,000), family paras (2,500), and health service aides (300). In addition to paras hired by the public schools, many other agencies, both public and community-based, employ many thousands of people in para-professional-like jobs that provide services to school children and their families. To cite just one example, there are about 2,000 school-crossing guards employed by the Police Department who help children cross streets on their way to and from schools.

Classroom aides must have at least a high-school education, with many earning credits toward (or already having) a college degree; they earn between $9.04 and $12.81 per hour, and are represented by the United Federation of Teachers. Non-classroom aides, depending on their jobs,

have educational levels running all the way from less than high-school graduation to a full college degree, are paid roughly $8-$12 per hour, and are represented by District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (DC37-AFSCME). Paraprofessional-like employees in other agencies have a wide variety of job titles, qualifications, and pay scales.

Nearly all paraprofessionals in the New York City public schools are offered, "career-ladder" opportunities to enable them, through further education and experience, to advance to higher-level jobs, including advancement into teaching or other professional positions. Although some career-ladder paths work better than others, there is an extensive set of relationships between the Board of Education, the Community School Districts, the unions, colleges, and training organizations to provide opportunities for upward mobility for paraprofessional staff. The career ladders of the classroom aides are arranged through the UFT and the City University of New York (CUNY). For the most part, the career ladders of non-classroom aides are arranged through DC37, the College of New Rochelle and CUNY.

**The Potential for Increased Paraprofessional Employment**

Despite this extensive system for employment and career advancement of paraprofessionals in the city's schools, many children's needs remain unmet—needs that might be filled either by redefining the work of existing paraprofessional staff, or by hiring new paraprofessional workers. There are many ways in which the whole system of paraprofessional employment and career advancement in the schools might be improved. This report, however, will focus primarily on the potential for meeting children's unmet needs through the employment of additional paraprofessional personnel, both because of the current increased need and the opportunity for increased funding for this kind of employment.

This "window of opportunity" has been opened by current changes in policy thinking in both education and welfare. As seen in New York State's New Compact for Learning, Kentucky's state-wide restructuring effort, the "Comer" schools, "Accelerated" schools, and similar efforts,

educators are increasingly aware of the need for "restructuring" schools—particularly urban schools—into collaborative efforts of home, school, and community in order to enable many more students to succeed in school. At the same time, welfare policy is moving increasingly toward requiring employment as a condition for receiving public assistance, as reflected in the Family Support Act of 1988 and President Clinton's welfare reform proposals, as well as those of a number of states.

Since many children's unmet needs can be met by many of those for whom it is otherwise difficult to find employment—because they lack experience, live far from other employment opportunities, or need to care for young children—there is the potential for a good match between "large numbers of people without jobs and a great many jobs without people."[1] (See Appendix A for a more extensive review of the history and policy theories of hiring neighborhood people for public-service jobs.)

**The Changing Educational Policy Scene**

Let's look more closely at children's unmet needs and the changing educational policy that might lead to the hiring of neighborhood people as a desirable way to meet these needs. Urban schools and teachers are facing increasing pressure to find ways to succeed with children who up until now have typically failed in school because of home or community problems, bad relationships between home and school, misunderstandings because of differences in culture between families and teachers, behavior problems, peer relationships, and similar difficulties.

When schools try to deal with these problems, they typically find that they need help that is not readily available from existing school staff because of inadequate training, talent, or time. A teacher might suspect that a child is unable to concentrate on his school-work because of problems at home, but he or she does not have the time or has not developed the skills necessary to meet with the family to find out what the problem is or help to resolve it. A child might begin to fall increasingly under the influence of a peer group that is alienated from the school, and the teacher may feel powerless to do anything about it. Children may have evident health or emotional

problems that interfere with their school-work, and yet the school does not have the resources to help such children or their families deal with them. Urban schools are currently so overwhelmed with such problems that they often feel helpless, and as a result feel that the new goals of high achievement for all children (e.g., in such policies as New York State's Compact for Learning) are unrealistic.[2] Such skepticism can stop any progress on urban school reform before it even begins. The ability to hire and train carefully selected neighborhood people who are knowledgeable about the community, in close touch with the school's families, trained and linked to the school staff, and capable of connecting the school with community agencies and resources of all kinds to help children and their families, could turn this sense of hopelessness around and thus make an extremely important contribution to the improvement of inner-city education.[3] James Comer, in describing his program for inner-city schools, discusses the positive effects when students

> observed their parents, or people from the community who were very much like their parents, interacting in a cooperative way with teachers and other school staff members. Students often sought the approval, guidance, and support of the parent assistants in the building. And in a climate of good parent/teacher relationships, students were more responsive to the academic and behavioral expectations of the school staff. Parent assistants and teachers shared knowledge that enabled the parents to better support the academic, social, and psychological growth of the students.[4]

Even such simple things as helping a parent get a library card, discussing a film on parenting skills, or planning an excursion to the zoo, can make a tremendous difference in the educational experience of an inner-city child and in the relationship between home and school.

The large immigrant and non-English-speaking population in New York creates an additional reason for hiring neighborhood people to help children succeed in school. As one report on the high dropout rate among Hispanic students pointed out, the small number of Spanish-speaking teachers and counselors leaves "Hispanic students who have academic problems, and their parents, with few advocates they can comfortably confide in."[5] There are many schools and school situations where communication breaks down and mistrust and alienation builds up because of lack

of non-English-speaking staff. Paraprofessionals can be a major bridge between school and families of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds.

A major question up until now has been how money could be found to hire such additional workers and aides to enable schools to begin meeting these needs. If these funds must come from existing school budgets, they would have to compete with the strong demands of teachers for smaller classes, higher pay, and adequate materials; of school boards for more security guards, sports programs, and transportation; of administrators for more counselors, administrative help, and security staff; of courts for more elaborate screening procedures, paper-work, and record keeping for handicapped children, etc. Now, however, there is a new potential source of funds that would not have to compete with these compelling (and more politically powerful) demands. New welfare policies raise an important question that up until now has remained unanswered: Where will the jobs come from to employ otherwise dependent and unemployed welfare clients if their welfare support is cut off after a year or two? As Cornel West says in his recent compelling essay, *Race Matters*, "On the practical and political level, the only feasible alternative to the welfare state is to create more jobs for poor people."[6] If the new positions needed to help children become successful learners and citizens can be seen by governments as a likely source of the jobs needed for welfare reform, then a potential new source of funding for such positions might be expected. As Nathan Glazer points out, "We will progress, if we do, to the degree it is possible for us to multiply programs and initiatives which relate school and education and training to skills and work more effectively."[7] Whether this rationale for increased funding will work out in reality depends on a closer look at some of the potential jobs and how they might be paid for.

## Potential Jobs for Neighborhood People

One neglected area of potential increased employment that looks particularly promising at this time in inner-city schools is non-classroom paraprofessional positions. Although New York City already has over 9,000 aides working as lunch helpers, over 8,000 aides monitoring halls, collecting lunch money, issuing bus passes and carrying out similar tasks, and almost 3,000 paras working in school security, there are relatively few paraprofessionals actually working with children and their families to facilitate successful learning. What is needed now are more staff from the neighborhood who can help teachers and other school staff relate more productively to inner-city children and their families, and help families provide the supportive home environment that can make for successful learning and citizenship. These staff could work either for schools or for community-based organizations.

A look at some jobs in the public schools where employment might be expanded will give us a more realistic idea of whether there is potential for funding such jobs through welfare reform programs.

### Specific Non-classroom Jobs that Could Be Expanded

While it would be possible to create new job titles to fit the needs of schools trying to reach children and families who are having problems with school success, practicality dictates using existing job titles if possible for expanding paraprofessional employment in the public schools—at least in the beginning. These jobs already have qualifications, job descriptions, salary rates, promotion and career ladders, and all the bureaucratic machinery set up and negotiated with the union for hiring, promoting, and paying personnel. Several of the job titles in the New York City public schools should be applicable to the kinds of jobs that now must be expanded in order for schools to reach the new goals of academic achievement and citizenship required for inner-city children. These job titles include:

1) Family Paraprofessionals (Family Worker, Assistant, Associate) The "General duties and responsibilities" of "family paras" call for providing "supportive service for children by encouraging parents to participate in school life and by identifying and resolving special family needs which may have an effect upon the education of a child."[8] There are currently about 2,500 family paras working in New York City schools. This averages to about two per school (though they are not evenly spread throughout the city), and although many of these paras do extremely important work in helping children and families, many of them currently do not work in schools with highly developed partnership relations between home, school, and community. As more schools work on developing such partnerships, under the New York State New Compact for Learning or under such programs as the Comer schools, Accelerated schools, and the League of Schools Reaching Out, the work of these paras is more likely to be seen as crucially important for implementing a school's strategic plan, and there is also more chance that larger numbers of such workers will be needed, particularly in inner-city areas. Not only could they help students and families relate better to the schools, they could also help teachers and other school staff relate better to students, families, and communities.

A person can start at the lowest rung of the family para position (family worker) without a high school diploma, but can work up to "family worker A" with a high-school or equivalency diploma, and to "family assistant" positions of various ranks with various numbers of college credits. The salary ranges between $8 and $12 per hour. Some informants feel that the family para position would be the most flexible for many of the functions contemplated for a neighborhood employment project.

2) Family Auxiliary The employees in this category, "under the supervision of a teacher or project coordinator," can provide "supportive services for children by encouraging parents to participate in school life and by identifying and resolving special family needs which may have an effect upon the education of a child." The family auxiliaries also "visits homes," "becomes familiar with local public and private agencies,"

"may accompany families on visits to public and private agencies," "encourages parents to participate in school life," "provide(s) baby-sitter services for parents in order to allow for participation in school activities," "work(s) with Parents' Association," "meet(s) with pedagogical staff and parents, and assist(s) in discussions relating to the needs of children as they relate to special family needs and problems."[9]

3) School Neighborhood Workers. These employees "obtain and maintain community interest and participation in educational programs and provide services for neighborhood residents." They might conduct workshops for parents to improve school community relations, implement various educational programs that require parent or community participation, or conduct various parent-outreach activities. They may also seek out community resources for after-school tutoring, mentoring programs, social service referrals, and the like.

This job requires a high-school diploma and some community service or college experience for entry, which would exclude some potential applicants, but for those who qualify the pay is higher than for family paraprofessionals. There are currently fewer than 300 school neighborhood workers in the New York City school system, but the need for the work they could do is clearly far beyond what these numbers could provide. Given the kinds of social, economic, and community problems many schools face in trying to help their children succeed in school, it would seem that many more such workers could be employed.

4) Health Service Aides. Health service aides are limited to health services, such as First Aid, maintaining health and immunization records, etc., but from the testimony of teachers and principals as to the unmet health needs of inner-city children, it is clear that many more health services are needed.[10] There are currently only about 300 health aides in the city schools—less than one for every three schools, but with the expansion of partnerships with local hospitals and health organizations and of school health clinics there

will be a need for many more. This job requires a high school diploma and First Aid and CPR training for entry, and is paid on an hourly basis at $8 to $9 per hour.

5) School Aides. This job title is quite flexible and could provide options for a variety of jobs to help children and families. Typically, school aides now perform jobs such as hall, playground, and lavatory monitoring; collecting and recording milk and lunch money; and distributing bus and subway passes. But schools interested in expanding home-school-community partnerships have talked of hiring more school aides for such jobs as parent liaison, parent room coordinator, newsletter aide, home visitor, and community liaison. There may be a problem, however, with a rule to the effect that at least 51 per cent of a school aide's time must be spent on monitorial duties, which, if enforced, might limit work with parents.

School aides require only an eighth-grade education, which means that this position would be the most available for many unemployed neighborhood people. If a good match is found between the personal talents of the applicant and the needs of the school's children and families, a worthwhile employment arrangement can develop, with career advancement possibilities for those who continue their education (they get up to $175 per semester in educational benefits). They are paid on an hourly basis at $8 to $9 per hour.

6) Office Associates. Office associates are hired to work in administrative offices, usually under the direction of a secretary or administrator. They are hired on an hourly basis and have no benefits, training stipends, or career ladder. They have typically not been used at the school level. This policy might be changed, however, so that they might be trained to provide more liaison and "welcoming" services for parents who come into the school office, and thereby help to create a stronger home-school-community partnership. There may, however, be limitations on how much they can do beyond clerical duties under present policies.

7) Other Board of Education Paraprofessional Positions. In addition to the above positions, there may be positions in school security, attendance, special education, and administration that

could be adapted to the needs of an NEI. The philosophy of school partnership is that *any* member of a school staff should be part of the team creating a strong sense of home-school-community partnership working for the success of every student. Therefore, many paraprofessional staff members who may now be performing such specific duties as, for example, school safety officer, can also function as links between home, school, and community.

All of these paraprofessional job titles include health and welfare benefits, either throgh the Board of Education or through the union.

**Classroom Aides**

Although this report is focused on non-classroom paraprofessionals, the full picture on increasing employment of neighborhood people to help children succeed in school includes the very important area of classroom aides. Some of the new thinking underway in this area is also relevant to the non-classroom paraprofessional area.

Anna Lou Pickett's very useful study for the National Governors' Association, "Restructuring the Schools: The Role of Paraprofessionals," points out that nationally there has been a tremendous growth in classroom paraprofessionals in the last thirty years—from fewer than 10,000 in 1965 to over 600,000 by 1987.[11] During the 1980s alone, the number of paraprofessionals in special education grew from about 50,000 to 150,000.[12] These tremendous increases were obviously made possible by the great increase in funding (mostly federal and state) for remedial and special education over these periods. But Pickett also reports that "the roles and responsibilities of education paraprofessionals have changed dramatically since they were first introduced into the classroom as 'teacher aides' thirty years ago. These aides have moved toward greater technical expertise and responsibilities, to the point where many of them "might more aptly be described as 'paraeducators,' just as their counterparts in law or medicine are designated paralegals and paramedics."[13]

Despite this significant development of the field of classroom paraprofessionals, Pickett sees in the current educational restructuring movement a potential for even further changes, upgrading, and expansion of the role of teaching paras. The current reform movement's call for "dramatically increasing the productivity of the education system will necessitate equally dramatic changes in curriculum and instruction, authority and decision making, staff roles, and accountability systems," including new roles for teachers in managing and organizing instruction, assessing student progress in new ways, helping students in the course of teaching and learning rather than through remediation, collaborating with colleagues and support staff, and in much higher levels of professional development. As teachers assume new and expanded leadership roles in the classroom and the school, "paraprofessionals can play an important role in working with students, supporting teachers, and making more flexible instructional arrangements possible." [15]

For instance, in the important and much-discussed area of revising student assessment practices, paraprofessionals can help by "observing and recording data about student performance and participating in other informal assessment activities."[16] Since a major purpose of changed assessment practices is to help students succeed instead of just measuring and recording their failure for the purposes of "accountability" and "standards," the involvement of paraprofessionals from the community in the assessment process can also help teachers gain insight into why the student is failing and what can be done to correct the situation.

Pickett cites other examples of how paraprofessionals can be especially useful (often doing things that teachers and other staff members may be less equipped to do): serving "as job coaches in secondary vocational training and work programs," "training and monitoring students who work off campus", "preparing students to live and work independently," working as library aides, becoming "a link between special and regular education for students with special needs who are ready to move to a less restrictive environment," or serving as key members of infant, toddler, and early-childhood development teams.

With these changes—and potential changes—Pickett sees the need for "much work" to be done in clarifying job descriptions, qualifications, training, certification, and supervision of

classroom paraprofessionals. She makes particularly important comments about the need for adjusting career-ladder programs to fit with these changes—many of which comments also have application to non-classroom paraprofessional career ladders.

Career Ladders. Currently career ladders for classroom aides are generally regarded as a means for paraprofessionals achieve professional status, with city-paid college courses (including time off to take the courses) as the principal steps. The ladders "rarely provide structured in-service training for employees who want to continue as paraprofessionals. They are not designed to allow for career advancement or mobility based on distinction in duties, skills, and training requirements at different levels, and they do not include performance criteria for advancement.[17]

The result is that the arrangements for paraprofessionals are not adequate to promote the kind of development of these positions that is now called for. In particular, they fail to capitalize on the potential use of paraprofessional positions for imaginative recruitment of talent into the teaching profession or even high paraprofessional ranks. This hurts recruitment not only of minority teachers, as Pickett points out[18], but of teachers of various ethnic backgrounds who have special talents for helping inner-city children become successful. It has been noticed for years that some paraprofessionals are particularly adept at providing the kind of encouragement and support, as well as the substantive help, that many of these students need to overcome their feelings of alienation and insecurity, so they can begin to gain control over their own educational motivation. But many of these particularly effective paraprofessionals do not respond well to the standard college courses made available for career-ladder advancement. And too many of them never advance into professional ranks or, for that matter, even into the higher paraprofessional ranks.

The Career Opportunities Program (COP), administered by the U.S. Office of Education from 1970-77, tried to address these problems with training programs more

suited to neighborhood adults, many of whom are often supporting families. Rather than regular on-campus college courses, the goal was to provide school-site college work directly connected with paid employment as paraprofessionals, and coordinated with relevant in-service training. This kind of experience gave both the paraprofessionals and school officials opportunities to find out which candidates had potential to become career teachers and to ensure that they got the training, education, and career experience needed for effective professional development.[19]

Unfortunately, the COP program was discontinued in 1977. Perhaps something along these lines - for both classroom and non-classroom paraprofessionals could be revived now that the necessity for succeeding with inner-city children is becoming clearer, school organizational patterns are being restructured to achieve these higher expectations, and teacher roles are being redefined to provide much more flexible, entrepreneurial, and team approaches in classrooms and schools.

College Articulation Problems. Pickett points out one important obstacle to such a development, however: "Perhaps the most significant problem encountered by these training programs and therefore the students they serve, involves the articulation agreements between community colleges and four-year colleges and universities. Usually only liberal arts credits transfer for full credit; special education, early childhood credits, or other education credits count only as electives. For this reason, paraprofessionals and other potential students do not perceive earning an associate degree as a direct step toward becoming a teacher."[20] And, since regular four-year college attendance is not a practical career pathway for many of these talented people, many of them are lost to the profession, while teacher education programs continue to accept and credential candidates who have less capacity for helping inner-city children succeed, but who are more able to proceed through the usual teacher education pathways. Overcoming this problem could be a way

not only to recruit more effective staff for inner-city schools but to answer the constant complaint of many teacher educators that they cannot recruit more minority candidates.

Pickett is hopeful that, with teacher-education programs now being redesigned in response to the restructuring movement, these problems will be addressed so that the talented neighborhood people needed to make inner-city schools successful will be identified and helped to work their way up through paraprofessional ranks and relevant training and college experiences.

**Jobs Outside the Public Schools**

In addition to jobs within the public school system, there is also potential for providing Neighborhood Employment Initiative employment in community-based organizations (CBOs) or other public or private agencies, such as hospitals, welfare offices or family assistance units. Paraprofessionals of various kinds, for instance, have been hired in CBOs under the Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention (AIDP) program funded through the New York State Education Department. The New York City school system has contracted out the management of a number of these programs to United Way, which has established a Community Achievement Project in the Schools (CAPS) to handle it. This kind of arrangement could be expanded, either with education funding or funding coming through welfare reform programs.

The job titles, salaries, benefits, and career opportunities vary among the different agencies employing neighborhood people. Salaries and benefits are often lower in CBO positions, and this has caused some problems when the staffs need to work together with school-system paraprofessional staff. On the other hand, with limited funds and sometimes inflexible bureaucratic or political problems or union jurisdictional complications in the public schools, there may be advantages to hiring the needed paraprofessionals through a CBO. If this is done, however, special care should be taken to make sure that the paraprofessional staff is working cooperatively with the school staff, so that they help form a collaborative relationship between home and school, and between teachers and families.

## Potential Funding Sources

Two main types of funding are needed for a Neighborhood Employment Initiative of the type discussed in this report: (1) funding for the salaries and fringe benefits of the paraprofessionals, and (2) funding for training, coordination, administration, and evaluation. Both types of funding might be obtained from the same source and even in the same grant, but realistically, funding for salaries is likely to be available only from public funds, except for small pilot projects, whereas funding for non-salary costs might be obtained from foundation or corporate sources.

There are three main potential sources of public funding available to school systems for an NEI: (1) education programs, (2) employment programs, and (3) welfare-reform programs.

### Education Programs

Most paraprofessionals in public schools have up to now been paid for education funding--from the regular tax-supported school budgets ("tax levy"); from special programs such as Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which is designed particularly to help disadvantaged children and is now the largest federal appropriation - $6.7 billion - for local school systems (New York City receives over $400 million of these funds); from smaller federal or state education programs such as AIDP, subsidies for education of the handicapped; or from drug-prevention programs. Reportedly in New York City the largest numbers of paraprofessionals are currently being hired as "substitute paras" in the special education program, where more funding and positions are available.

Funding for an NEI from regular tax revenues is unlikely for the near future, since these funds are having a hard time maintaining present levels of school staffing and services, let alone keeping up with the need for increased salaries and services. This is also for the most part true of most special programs, with two important exceptions:

(1) There is now some chance of increased funding for some of these programs, such as Head Start and Chapter 1, which have proved beneficial and fit into President Clinton's policy of



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"investing in people." If school systems place a priority on hiring neighborhood paraprofessionals for the purposes discussed in this report, some of these increased funds should be available for this purpose.

(2) Some of the special programs, most particularly Chapter 1, have become more flexible, and may become even more so through revisions now being discussed in connection with their reauthorization. The new flexibility should provide more options for use of these funds for programs like NEI. School systems therefore should look carefully at these new potential funding sources (e.g., the new "schoolwide project" option under Chapter 1) and make sure that any additional funds or new flexibilities are not limited by existing patterns of fund use.

**Employment Programs**

In the past, employment programs have been of limited value to public-school systems, either because schools have not been able to qualify for the funding, or because, if they did qualify, the funding has proved erratic and/or tied up with onerous regulations and difficult bureaucratic relationships with other agencies.

These conditions may change, however. There is more recognition of the need for different programs and departments to work together in addressing urban needs, and the Clinton Administration has already begun interdepartmental discussions to press further in this direction. A priority on helping children become successful students so they can become successful employees and citizens could lead to tailoring employment programs so that they can be more readily suited to programs such as an NEI. Particular programs that should be looked into include:

The JOBS Program. The JOBS program (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program, under the Family Support Act of 1988, is attractive because it is a way of leveraging federal and state funds. For every $20 of local (or foundation) funds, the state puts up another $20 and the federal government puts up $60. The limitation, of course, is that the local project has to come up with the local funds. A school system, therefore, could not

use Chapter 1 (federal) or AIDP (state) funds for its contribution, and local tax-levy funds tend to be fully committed or spoken for by tougher competitors.

The JTPA Program. The JTPA program (Joint Training Partnership Act) is probably less useful for NEI purposes, at least as it is administered in New York City. The city tends to use the program for customized training to improve the quality of existing city programs; so, unless this policy is changed, it would not tend to be available for employing neighborhood paraprofessionals.

**Welfare Reform Programs**

Welfare programs have already unofficially provided funding that has enabled school systems to benefit from the involvement of neighborhood people who, except for their welfare support, would not be able to volunteer to help with school activities. Two of the changes in welfare policy now being discussed (and in some cases implemented) should provide more opportunity for actually hiring neighborhood people in programs like NEI:

(1) Raising the limits on how much salary a welfare recipient can make without losing welfare or health benefits should increase the number of neighborhood people available for employment and provide ways for them to work their way into regular jobs.

(2) The trend in welfare reform is to facilitate, and in some instances require, employment. A major problem with such reform efforts, however, is the lack of available jobs for which welfare recipients can qualify. An NEI may be well suited for helping to solve this problem, since it can provide employment right in the neighborhood (thus avoiding transportation problems), can allow people to be hired with minimal formal qualifications and work their way up, and can provide employment on flexible schedules, or with child-care possibilities, enabling parents of young children to become employed.



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## Appendix A: Background

The Neighborhood Employment Initiative proposal emerges from two mutually reinforcing needs: (1) the need for the services of parents and neighborhood people to help link home, school, and community to the successful education of inner-city children, and (2) the need for increased employment opportunities for inner-city populations. Neither of these needs is new, but each of them is becoming more salient, and the growing awareness of how they might fit together provides a powerful basis for new policy, funding, and action in the 1990s.

### Historical Background

Looking back at how these needs have been conceived and met (or not met) in the past can help us understand better both the challenge and the opportunity that now confront us. At least as early as the New Deal programs in the 1930s, the idea of hiring non-professional neighborhood people for human-service work has been a public-policy option. The National Youth Administration, for instance, placed emphasis on hiring and training potential or actual school dropouts for various purposes. These programs were phased out, however, during World War II without having made any appreciable change in the practices of most public school systems.

After the war, the Ford Foundation sponsored pilot projects for the use of paraprofessional school staff in Bay City, Michigan; Fairfield, Connecticut; and New Jersey. These projects stimulated a few small efforts in other districts in the 1950s, but, again, the concept did not become institutionalized in public school systems. As one analyst put it, "The teaching profession appeared to react negatively on the whole to an employment device which would assign available education funds to the employment of untrained personnel rather than to the employment of more teachers."[21] Nor did most school leaders (superintendents, principals, or school boards) see any need to encourage new thinking in this direction.

In the 1960s, the concept of *New Careers for the Poor* gained considerable increased attention and funding as part of the new focus on reducing poverty in America. Arthur Pearl and Frank Riessman's 1965 book of that title argued that the services required for poor people cannot be accomplished without the employment of people from the normally "client" populations—both because the numbers of people required can never be met through professional staff alone, and also because some of the needed services can be performed better by people from the communities served than by non-indigenous professionals. In other words, perhaps unlike the employment priorities of the Depression-inspired New Deal, Pearl and Riessman argued that the employment of neighborhood people was needed *to accomplish the agendas of the social agencies hiring them*, and not just to provide employment for those hired.[22]

**New Careers in Education**

Pearl and Riessman applied this thinking to many human-service fields—e.g., health, mental health, drug prevention, care of the elderly—but they placed special emphasis on education. In a chapter of their book by Henry Saltzman, entitled "The Poor and the Schools," Saltzman argued that "the educator must begin to view the poor as a manpower pool from which to draw personnel who can do more than simply relieve teachers of non-teaching duties. The educator must begin to see that members of the slum community can bring to the school skills and perceptions *essential* to the improvement of the school's program."[23]

After discussing the growing recognition of the harm done to society as well as to poor children by their under-education, he concludes that "*the employment of the poor in the slum school becomes appropriate, logical and important, perhaps crucial.* For, while members of the slum community may lack much formal education, they may have the wisdom dearly bought from the experience of surviving the rigors of their environment; while they may lack an understanding of the organization of the school, they may know intimately the organization of the community; while they may be unschooled in the nuances of middle-class mores and customs, they may know full well what will or will not 'go' in the slum community; while they may lack a grasp of



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educational philosophy and theory, they may be fully conversant with what is or is not perceived as important, honest and useful by the school's constituency."[24]

**Needed Jobs, Training, and Results**

In bolstering his case that hiring auxiliary neighborhood staff was beneficial *to the school and to the students*, as well as to the employees, Saltzman argued that inner-city residents can "assume significant roles in helping the school frame and execute programs to deal with each of the barriers to school success" that educators have identified:

(1) "family helpers" could help immigrant families with adjustment,

(2) "library aides" could help libraries keep longer hours or get books into homes,

(3) "school guides" could help with enrichment tours,

(4) "nursery mothers" could strengthen preschool programs,

(5) "school-community agents" could serve as liaison between school and community,

(6) "talent searchers" could bring successful graduates to the school or the children to the graduates, and

(7) "home visitors" could help reach the "hard-to-reach" parents.

He pointed out that many more roles and functions could be developed once educators begin to think in these terms, and he cited the Philadelphia Great Cities School Improvement Project and the Pittsburgh Team Teaching Project as cases in which neighborhood "school-community coordinators" and "team mothers" were very successful in helping get community resources into the school and school personnel involved with the community, and as well as providing "important insights which teachers cannot obtain in any other way."[25]

Both Saltzman and Pearl and Riessman were quick to point out that careful screening, training, and support are needed to make sure that the community people selected have the right skills and attitudes and are that they provided with the training and support needed to function successfully in

these new roles. Likewise, the regular staff also needs training, orientation, and support to learn how to work with these new resources.

The 1960s provided a variety of new programs, funded through government and foundation grants, to try out the "new careers" concept—such as the Community Action Program, the Model Cities Program, Mobilization for Youth, and the Haryou Act. By 1968, Garda Bowman and Gordon Klopf were able to review the experience of fifteen demonstration projects across the country that made significant use of non-professional neighborhood people in school programs, mostly as teacher aides in the classroom. The lessons seemed to be that there were "great possibilities in the professional-non-professional team enabling teachers to differentiate education so as to meet the individual needs of pupils." The "multiple benefits which were perceived as possible in all school situations" included: "more individual attention by concerned adults," "more opportunity for innovation," more "manageable" and "productive" teaching conditions, greater ability to meet student needs despite shortages of professional staff, and "a means through which unemployed and educationally disadvantaged persons may enter the mainstream of productivity."[26]

**Obstacles to Progress**

The problem, however, noted by Saltzman in 1965, still true in 1968 when Bowman and Klopf reviewed the projects—and still true today, twenty-five years later—is that these programs have remained mostly "pilot projects" or "demonstrations." "The massive job of instituting improved practices in all of the schools requiring these has...barely begun."[27] While the use of classroom aides has become institutionalized in many school systems and greatly expanded though the use of Title I and Special Education funding, the use of aides for many of the other purposes mentioned by Saltzman and Pearl and Riessman in the 1960s for linking home, school, and community, and now so clearly needed for the "restructuring" reforms of the 1990s, remains undeveloped and fragmentary.

The intervening years between the 1960s and the 1990s has been not so much a period of further trial and development of these ideas but a reversion to a school policy framework which

(with the exception of classroom aides) has not seriously considered the concepts that seemed so promising in the 1960s. Lest one single out schools unduly in this regard, it should be pointed out that schools have only been following the general outlook and organizational patterns of the social services generally. Social services in American society have commonly been defined as something "delivered" by professionals and organized through bureaucratic agencies. The combination of restrictive professionalism and bureaucracy, together with the general roll-back in initiatives for the poor in the 1980s, kept the "new careers" movement largely in a state of dormancy through the 70s and 80s..

**Renewed Interest in the 1990s**

The 1990s are showing signs of awakening from this twenty-year sleep. Those concerned with social services are once again coming to see non-professional neighborhood people as valuable resources for meeting human needs that are not met through traditional professional and bureaucratic structures and welfare reformers are once again seeing the employment of such people as a partial solution to the desperate need for employment opportunities for inner-city populations.

Peter Edelman and Beryl Radin, in their 1991 review of thirty years of debate over social services for the poor, conclude that the "synthesis for the 90s" must include not only much more collaboration among government agencies at all levels, but a realization that "society's pressing social problems will not be solved without the participation of all of us, individually and in the institutions of which we are a part—our churches, our companies, our unions, the United Way"—all leading to a sense of "community, of a social infrastructure that embodies stability and security and shared values."[28]

In commenting on Edelman and Radin's report, Sidney Gardner points out that "part of a new agenda" must be the "growth and development of a strong cadre of minority professionals committed to serving children and families: teachers, social workers, community organizers, employment and training specialists, mental health counselors, health professionals and others." He points out that the source for these has "all but dried up" in recent years.[29] The Neighborhood



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Employment Initiative provides a way to begin priming the pump again for this vital human resource in meeting our social needs.

If anything, the need for finding new ways to employ neighborhood paraprofessionals in education and other social-support efforts is greater today even than in the 1960s. The demand for markedly higher educational and socialization achievement, frustration with existing bureaucratized services, and impatience with government "handouts" are growing across the political spectrum. Furthermore, research and experience, both on children's and families' needs and problems and on effective solutions, increasingly point to the foolishness of neglecting this potential resource for meeting human needs and reducing welfare dependency.

Another change from the 1960s is that school officials are more ready to consider this approach. More educators are seeing that involving parents and neighborhood people in forging a partnership between home, school, and community meets at least four needs mentioned by Edelman and Radin: (1) The functions performed by these new employees (home visits, parent education, social-agency referral, supportive help in the classroom, etc.) help to implement "the participation of all of us" by enabling schools to involve families and community resources in the education of the community's children in ways that schools usually do not do; (2) they can help parents "to take responsibility for themselves and to make the maximum use of the help available to move toward self-sufficiency"; (3) those employed are themselves participating and taking responsibility in ways that they weren't before; and (4) the whole enterprise can help to create a sense of "community," making the school not just a place where the services of an outside professional agency are performed, but a part of a community effort, which can in turn enlist the loyalty and support of the community. The new orientation of educators to this approach is exemplified by the League of Schools Reaching Out's slogan, "It takes the whole village to raise a child," which has been adopted by the New York State Board of Regents and education commissioner as part of the state's New Compact for Learning.

**New Studies Back "New Careers" Concept**

In a recent survey of New York inner-city principals on what would be needed to succeed with today's urban children, the Principals Speak Project found the principals unanimous on the critical need for more social and psychological support for many of the children and their families. In addition to the need for more professional support staff (guidance counselors, social workers, mental health professionals, etc.), the principals found that "paraprofessionals, such as family workers, can be particularly useful for reaching out to parents in their areas, e.g., for helping them make contact with community health, housing and welfare services, helping them actually get to agencies to which they are referred, and helping them relate more productively to the school and their children's learning."[30]

One principal was particularly enthusiastic about the work of paraprofessionals in her Primary Mental Health Program. She described how this project works with children "who are going through an emotional stage or who seem very delayed for emotional reasons, but we don't want to refer them to special ed." The program provides a neighborhood paraprofessional, working under the supervision of a psychologist, and a room set up so that children feel comfortable in a non-threatening atmosphere. The paraprofessional "sees children for forty-five minutes individually and then later some of them in small groups. The aim is to be supportive of the child and provide...a person he or she can feel is concerned." The principal's only regret was that she didn't have more such help.[31] When other principals learned of this program (there are only a handful of them in New York City), they saw an urgent need for this kind of program in their schools.

The Principals Speak Project concluded that the PMHP "appears to be a cost-effective mental health model, combining professional expertise along with the indigenous paraprofessional knowledge of the neighborhood ethnic groups, knowledge of the culture of poverty, and knowledge of the neighborhood and its inhabitants." It cites the psychologist in charge of the PMHP for a very deprived New York City area as saying that "many more are needed." She said that this program "has begun to target one of the most emotionally needy groups—foster children, a group that is growing in numbers by leaps and bounds in the city's public schools." A New

York State Education Department report on the program found that it helped in the "reduction in shy/withdrawn behavior, and improvement in study skills and academic achievement." The report found the cost to be less than $15 for a single contact with a child, compared to private-practice rates of $50 to $75, and an annual cost of $275 compared with annual rates of $15,000 to $44,000 for in-patient treatment facilities.[32]

The PMHP was started thirty-two years ago in Rochester, New York, and has been replicated in pilot projects in a number of places, but, despite all the talk about a "Decade of the Child" and "Education Presidents," it is available for only the tiniest fragment of public school children who have a desperate need for this kind of support program.

Another study showing the need for building strong links with the community—this time focusing on the needs of Hispanic children—was done by Melvin Delgado as part of a current research program of the federally sponsored Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning. Delgado was trying to find ways to "reach Puerto Rican families with culturally sensitive assistance in education, health, and human services programs." He found that the greatest potential "lies in reaching Puerto Rican families who currently have the most limited access to quality care and services because they are poor and not well acculturated, and thus less likely to seek assistance from formal institutions such as hospitals, educational centers, and community health centers." He sees the "natural support systems"—"the extended family, folk healers, religious groups, and merchant and social clubs"—as the key to reaching these families, and that, therefore, "there must be a conscious attempt to view families and children within a comprehensive framework of family, school, and community systems." He sees "prodigious potential for reaching underserved populations" in "collaboration between formal systems—for example, schools, social services, health care program — and natural support systems," but he also sees that "the barriers are great" to this kind of collaboration, with "lack of trust," "suspicion," cultural differences, and mutual lack of understanding being the prime problems.[33] The employment of neighborhood people can be a prime bridge for overcoming these barriers and for making education and social services effective in urban settings.

In short, the reawakening to the need for involving neighborhood people to help reach children who have been failing in our schools has grown considerably in recent years. The issue now is to start serious implemention of this concept, and to find ways at last to overcome the obstacles and institutionalize it as part of a restructured public education system. The chances for doing this are greatly enhanced by the possibility of new funding stimulated by the concurrent reawakening of interest in reducing welfare dependence through increased employment opportunities for inner-city populations.

**Welfare Reform**

Pearl and Riessman, in their 1965 *New Careers for the Poor*, were by no means interested only in finding ways to improve social services for the poor through drawing on the talents and perspectives of poor people themselves. They had the same dual purpose that motivates the present report: to improve social services and at the same time provide needed employment for unemployed poor people. Their book "deals with a current and unforgivable shame of the United States of America, the name of which is poverty." Prominent among the goals of their proposed "new careers for the poor" were:

1. A sufficient number of jobs for all persons without work.
2. The jobs to be so defined and distributed that placements exist for the unskilled and uneducated.
3. The jobs to be permanent and provide opportunity for life-long careers.[34]

Like the present author, they saw these needs as happily fitting together with "socially useful" work that needs to be done: "In over-simplified terms, there exist simultaneously large numbers of people without jobs and a great many jobs without people." "As long as there are people without work and work which, most agree, should be done, then the role of a rational society is to provide

the machinery and the procedures which make possible a connection between worker resources and manpower requirements."[35]

As with the educational reasons for involving neighborhood people, however, the logic of this marriage of two needs was not sufficient in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s to overcome the inertia of deeply entrenched bureaucratic and professional systems, prevailing policy frameworks and attitudes, or the demoralization caused by the cutbacks in social services suffered in the 1980s. Despite various studies and proposals calling for increased employment of poor people and even some legislation in this direction, far too little has been done to institutionalize new roles and functions that would significantly increase the availability of real and meaningful jobs.

As in education, however, the 1990s have brought a new policy orientation—in this case, a renewed emphasis on the employment component of welfare reform. The riots in Los Angeles and across the country have brought home to people that the problems of the inner cities have not gone away, but have just festered in hopelessness, and that where there are no jobs there is no chance that they will go away. "Where there is no justice, there is no peace" is becoming not just a slogan but a bedrock truth that must be faced. Having no means of employment is an elemental aspect of injustice. The pressure for finding new ways to employ otherwise relatively unemployable inner-city people will, it is hoped, provide a context in which the "new careers" concept can be revived and move ahead on both the welfare and the educational reform agendas.

## Appendix B: Suggested Funding Proposal

Although different funding sources will specify particular requirements for proposals, we believe that a school system wishing to obtain funding to expand paraprofessional staffing to assist students and their families to relate more successfully to school (and to assist schools in relating more successfully to students and their families) should consider the following components in a funding proposal:

### I. Introduction

A. The Basic Concept

Explain the basic concept. Meeting a dual need: (1) helping children's education through outreach to families and community, and (2) reducing welfare by employing difficult-to-employ parents and community people to help connect children and families with schools and successful learning.

B. Background

Earlier research and efforts in the 1960s. Many successful pilot programs and some institutionalization (e.g., Head Start Program, classroom paraprofessionals), but failure to develop the concept's full potential—at least partially because public school policy framework has focused on "delivery of instruction" rather than on creating success-oriented relationships and drawing on the resources of families, communities, other agencies, and the children themselves.

C. Current Research

Research and experience in recent years has confirmed validity of the basic concept of employing neighborhood people to assist with social services.

D. Educational Restructuring Movement

School systems are shifting to a success-oriented partnership approach, which provides an opportunity to implement the NEI concept more fully and to institutionalize as part of the public education system.

## II. Proposal

A. Applicant's Commitment to Restructuring

Explain that the school district is planning a long-term strategy to mobilize the resources of the community (families, CBO's, religious organizations, social and health agencies) to work in partnership with restructured schools for the successful education of all children in the district.

B. NEI as Part of Restructuring Plan

Explain how the Neighborhood Employment Initiative fits into the restructuring plan: Unlike many previous (and current) efforts to utilize paraprofessionals, the district proposes to hire parents and neighborhood people specifically to help the schools and the district shift to a partnership approach. They will be employed to help teachers and schools enlist families in the successful education of their children and to help them link up with the non-school resources needed for this success. Their employment will be accompanied by staff development to orient other school staff to the partnership approach and to help them learn how to use this resource as part of their new relationships with parents and students and of their restructured classroom and school practices. Time will be rescheduled to provide for the communication between regular school staff and the augmented paraprofessional outreach staff.

C. Positions Requested

Explain here the number and different types of paraprofessionals to be hired as part of the NEI. Although these new staff may be hired under various job titles recognized in the system (e.g. "family worker," "school aide,"), their functions will be designed for the particular program being proposed (e.g., home visitor; parent coordinator, parent room aide, counselor aide, community resource liaison, health aide, etc. The "in-house" job titles (used in the schools or project) may differ from official job titles. (Job descriptions and salary ranges for the various positions can be provided in an appendix.)

D. Where Employed

Explain where the proposed new paraprofessionals will be employed, e.g.: 1 parent coordinator, 1 home visitor at P.S._____, as part of (describe school's project, plan, etc.) 1 health aide, 1 counseling aide, etc. at P.S. _____, as part of (describe school's project, plan, etc.)

## III. Program Components

A. Project Director

Although funding for overall project direction will normally be provided through other sources (e.g., superintendent and district staff involved in the district's educational restructuring), a project director for the Neighborhood Employment Initiative is required to ensure that the special components of the project are carried out: coordination with school restructuring efforts (e.g., schedule adjustments to ensure time for communication); recruitment, selection, and training procedures; staff development for regular staff; career ladder; evaluation and research; liaison with city and state education and social-service agencies, etc.

The project director must be a competent administrator, with experience in educational and community liaison projects, leadership abilities, and personal characteristics similar to those described for project staff generally (described in B below). Include any special qualifications or procedures for recruiting and hiring.

B. Qualifications of New Outreach Staff.

The qualifications of the outreach staff are crucial to the success of the project. Indicate that the applicant district has drawn on the experience of past projects in specifying the qualifications being sought. For instance, the Mobilization for Youth program in the 60s concluded that candidates should "live in the area to be serviced, be familiar with the local lifestyles, be identifiable with or responsive to minority groups, and be bilingual." The program also looked for "good physical health," experience in "civic, social, fraternal groups," "maturity," "self-awareness," "ability to look at and accept differences in others and relate to various cultural and ethnic groups effectively," "capacity to tolerate frustration," warmth, friendliness, flexibility, "capacity for interdependency with acceptance of supervision," and "ability to maintain confidentiality about parents."[36] One program coordinator reported that she also had an additional implicit 'list' of attributes that guided her selections: She preferred people who were "action oriented" (doers), who "felt the need for change in the neighborhood—who experienced some discontent," who were "curious" and "receptive to training." She avoided "over emotional" people or "gossipers."[37] Cite any qualifications the district has developed as a result of its own experience.

C. Recruitment

Pearl and Riessman, in reviewing the experience of efforts to employ neighborhood paraprofessionals, found that recruitment was an important issue. The type of

candidates desired by the project may not readily apply. "The potential non-professional recruit, not realizing what special skills he possesses that are crucial" for the services to be provided, "tends to underestimate his own value and is sometimes timid about applying for the position."

Pearl and Riessman therefore urge "that word must spread both informally and formally. There are numerous sources that will be able to spot such people and persuade them to apply or persuade the professional agency to seek them out. An effort must be made to carefully inform all sources regarding the kinds of recruits desired, both in terms of the explicit attributes and the more subtle ones. The purposes behind the hiring of these indigenous people should be very clear to all the recruitment channels, and the ways in which they present the job opening to potential applicants whom they attempt to interest in the position, should be reviewed carefully." [38]

D. Selection

Henry Saltzman, in "The Poor and the Schools," while strongly advocating the hiring of neighborhood paraprofessionals, warns against "romanticism" about "both the potential and the strengths" of inner-city residents, many of whose lives have left "scars." He therefore urges that "great care and thought . . . be given to the screening of potential employees." The proposal should provide here a detailed description of the screening procedure to be used for this project to assure that the outreach staff hired will meet the qualifications specified and that the funds will not just be used for patronage purposes or to hire unemployed people solely because they need a job. If the applicant district has had successful experience in using screening procedures for paraprofessionals, this experience should be cited.

E. Training

Training is crucial to the success of the program. As Pearl and Riessman found in their studies, "Training indigenous persons to assume entry positions in human service is in many ways *the crux*" of the whole concept. Nothing could undermine the effort "so much as allowing untrained persons to do meaningful work with the romantic notion" that their neighborhood experience alone is sufficient qualification for helping others. "The non-professional without training is *not* an asset; he can, in fact, be a menace to the service. Not only is he unaware of his active role, he also has no idea of what he must not do."

Pearl and Riessman saw training needed for many things: specific skills, how "to relate positively both to other members of the staff and to persons in his care," "a feeling of belonging to the human service team," sometimes "a basic proficiency in reading and arithmetic," and the development of "a feeling of fulfillment which comes from engaging in manifestly necessary activities." [39]

They urged that "training must be job-related rather than general." "Training must provide the non-professional with a portfolio of specific skills" related to "a precise job description." They saw the need for special training with regard to maintaining confidentiality; acceptance of and use of authority; identifying with both the agency and the community; the proper balance between optimism and realism; knowledge about the mission, goals, programs, methods, timetables, and underlying rationale and concepts of the agency; "knowledge of low-income culture and the organization's views regarding this stratum and its subgroups"; knowledge of "service-giving procedures" (referrals, forms, etc.) "interviewing and establishing contact" with clients, reporting and record keeping, conducting meetings, and the relationships between professionals and non-professionals.

They saw such training taking from six weeks to three months, depending on the job, although with work and simulated work experience as part of the training,

and continued training once on the job. So far as methodology of training is concerned, Pearl and Riessman saw the need for "continuous on-the-job training and almost immediate initiation to work," an "activity rather than lecture approach," role-playing, an intensive team approach, a down-to-earth teaching style recognizing concrete tasks but concepts and theory as well, help from more experienced non-professionals, and "freedom for the non-professional to develop his personal style" within the agency's guidelines.[40]

The proposal should describe its training plans in detail: who will conduct, when it will be done, how much on-site and how much district-wide, etc.

F. Career Ladders

In addition to pre-service and in-service training for outreach staff, the project should describe the "career ladder" provisions for those staff who wish to pursue further education and/or credentialing for career enhancement. Not all outreach staff will desire this because of family obligations or other constraints, but some may wish to pursue further education either for its own sake, to increase their effectiveness in their present job, or to progress towards positions such as teacher, counselor, mental health worker or social worker.

Some systems, such as New York City, already have extensive career-ladder provisions for various paraprofessional positions. The available patterns should be reviewed and discussed with the various institutions involved (unions, colleges, training organizations). The career-ladder provisions might include the following options to start with (others perhaps being added at a later date):

1. Steps toward teaching. Those wishing to move from a non-classroom paraprofessional position to a professional teaching position should be able to shift into the established teaching career ladder at a level appropriate to their experience.

2. Steps toward social work, mental health work, etc. This should be discussed with the unions, the colleges, and the various professionals, to ensure that there are real pathways into professional levels of whatever field is appropriate. Just as with seeing classroom aides as a source of recruitment for teachers, paraprofessional outreach staff can be a source of recruitment for social workers, mental health workers, security staff, etc., with special talents for inner-city work.

G. Staff Development of Regular School Staff

Past experience indicates that training of the regular staff to work with the new staff is as important as the training of the new staff itself. Pearl and Riessman point out that "Professionals frequently are not clear about the role and the ability of" paraprofessionals. Saltzman warns that there can be "a too rapid glossing over the problem which can develop between professional school personnel and their new non-professional helpers."[41] Bowman and Klopf suggest that, at least in the 1960s programs, regular professional staff often worried that administrators might assign to paraprofessionals functions that were "essentially professional," thus intruding into their "turf," and that adequate time would not be provided for planning and evaluating with the paraprofessionals. The lesson from these programs was the need for careful orientation and training of principals, teachers and other staff "so they would utilize rather than ignore, reject, or resent the auxiliaries." [42]

School districts today have had the advantage of working with paraprofessional staff of various kinds for many years, so that teachers and other school staff are used to them and have learned both their value and how to work with them. Nevertheless, the Neighborhood Employment Initiative would be undertaken as part of an ambitious school restructuring effort, and new

expectations, roles, and relationships are being developed for everyone. The applicant district, therefore, should indicate that it does not underestimate the need for working with the regular staff in a number of ways to facilitate the expansion and new roles of the paraprofessional staff, including:

1. Orientation. Regular school staff, as well as parent and community leaders, are becoming oriented to the new "success for all through collaboration of all" policy direction of policy frameworks such as New York State's New Compact for Learning. Nevertheless, most school districts still have a long way to go in helping the various participants internalize the new goals, roles, and relationships. Work should be planned through
   (a) involvement of participants in planning for the new directions,
   (b) special orientation workshops, and
   (c) explanation and discussion of the new direction in regular staff-development activities.
2. Training. Orientation, although essential so that everyone can understand and absorb the new approaches, is not enough. Some specific training of regular staff is needed to facilitate working productively with the expanded paraprofessional staff. This includes:
   (a) help in working in collegial relationships with people of different cultural and educational backgrounds;
   (b) learning new roles and methods of operation (e.g., learning to see problems such as acting out, lack of attention, disrespect for others, and parental non-involvement, as challenges that might be addressed with the help of a family assistant rather than as incurable obstacles to successful learning);
   (c) learning "case management" approaches, where a team of those

concerned about a particular child pool their perceptions and expertise and develop a joint effort to help the child. Fill in other training goals and plans of the applicant district and explain how this training will be provided, to support the budget request for these activities.

H. Evaluation and Research

Because of the importance of the project both for educational restructuring and for welfare reform, significant evaluation and research should be planned beyond what would be needed for the operation of the project. The evaluation and research component might be conducted through a contract with an outside agency, but all key on-site staff and parent and community participants should be made aware of and be involved with the research and evaluation activities.

The research and evaluation should include:

1. Processing evaluation of implementation of the project, with periodic feedback to facilitate midcourse corrections.
2. Evaluation of the results of the work of the paraprofessionals—both results in assisting other school staff and results for children and families.
3. The reasons for the effects (both positive and negative) of the project on staff behavior and children's learning.

## Notes

* A useful summary of this area is found in Anna Lou Pickett, "Restructuring the Schools: The Role of Paraprofessionals," produced for the National Governors Association and available from the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, CASE, CUNY Graduate School, 25 West 43rd Street, Room 620, New York, NY 10036, (212) 642-2948.

1. Arthur Pearl & Frank Riessman, *New Careers for the Poor* (New York: Free Press, 1965), p.5.
2. See, for instance, David S. Seeley, John H. Niemeyer, & Richard Greenspan, *Principals Speak, Report #1: Restructuring Schools and School Leadership* (1990), and *Report #3: The Vital Importance of Mental Health/Social Services to School Reform.* (1993) (New York: CUNY Research Foundation, 1993).
3. A good discussion of the need for bridging the cultural gap between schools and poor families can be found in the discussion of programs such as the Comer and Accelerated Schools and Schools Reaching Out in *New Directions in Parent Education* by Norm Fruchter, Anne Galletta, and J. Lynne White (Academy for Educational Development, 1992), pp. 63-67.
4. Quoted in Fruchter, Galletta, & White.
5. William Celis, 3d, "Hispanic Dropout Rate Stays High, Since Children Work in Hard Times," *New York Times*, 10/14/92.
6. Cornel West, Race Matters (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), p.57.
7. Nathan Glazer, "A Human Capital Policy for the Cities," *The Public Interest*, Summer, 1993.
8. Job descriptions are quoted from DC37 "Greetings," pamphlet for 1988 Career Expo.
9. Board of Education Code No. 82206.
10. Greenspan, Seeley & Niemeyer, Report #3, Citizens' Committee for Children, *The Secret of Success: Personal Support Services for New York City's Public Elementary School Students* (1993).
11. Pickett, op. cit.
12. Ibid., p. 4.
13. Ibid., p. 1.
15. Ibid., p. 2.
16. Ibid., pp. 8, 6.
17. Ibid., p. 10.
18. Ibid., p. 17.
19. George Kaplan, *From Aide to Teacher: The Story of the Career Opportunities Program* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977).
20. Pickett, op. cit., pp. 19,20.
21. Garda W. Bowman & Gordon J. Klopf, *New Careers and Roles in the American School* (New York: Bank Street College of Education, 1968), p. 7.
22. Pearl & Riessman, op. cit.
23. Ibid., p. 39 (emphasis in original).
24. Ibid., pp. 47-48.
25. Ibid., pp. 48-51.
26. Bowman & Klopf, op. cit., p. 9.
27. Pearl & Riessman, op. cit., p. 47.
28. Peter B. Edelman & Beryl A. Radin, *Serving Children and Families Effectively: How the Past Can Help Chart the Future* (Washington, D.C.: Education and Human Services Consortium, 1991), p. 8.
29. Ibid., p. 18.
30. Greenspan, Seeley & Niemeyer, Report #3, p.18.
31. Ibid., p. 15.
32. New York State Education Department, "The Primary Mental Health Project," January 1987.
33. Center for Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning, Research and Development Report, May 1992, #2, pp. 8-10.
34. Pearl & Riessman, op. cit., p. 2.
35. Ibid., pp. 2, 5, 11.
36. Ibid., pp. 190-191.
37. Ibid., p. 193.
38. Ibid. pp. 191, 192.
39. Ibid., pp. 156-157.
40. Ibid., pp. 166-168.
41. Ibid., p. 53.
42. Bowman & Klopf, op. cit., pp. 11, 18.